

Hotel Ponce de Leon (Flagler College)
King, Valencia, Sevilla and Cordova Streets
St. Augustine
St. Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FL-173

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington D.C. 20240

STATE Florida	COUNTY St. Johns County	TOWN OR VICINITY St. Augustine
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Hotel Ponce de Leon		HABS NO. FL-173
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Flagler College		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) King, Valencia, Sevilla and Cordova Streets		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) Completed January 1888	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Carrere and Hastings	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) The first architectural commission for Carrere and Hastings; one of the earliest examples of poured-in-place concrete; one of the Flagler hotel system of resort hotels.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Spanish Renaissance Revival		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Coquina concrete, brick trim		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) 3½ to 4½ stories modified U shape, hipped roofs, central dome flanked by square towers		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) Tiffany glass, murals, mosaic tiles Murals and frescoes by George Maynard and Thomas Hastings of New York.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE College		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE Builders were McGuire and McDonald, St. Augustine; Original cost \$2,500,000.00.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) National Register of Historic Places, 1976, Volume II. Data compiled by Henry Edwards, HABS, St. Augustine Field Office, 1961. (See attached data sheet No. 4 for other sources)		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Eleni Silverman, HABS Architectural Historian		DATE June 1983

BRIEF ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Ponce de Leon occupies an entire block in the center of present day St. Augustine. Conceived in an eclectic style with detail largely drawn from Spanish and Northern Italian early Renaissance sources, the contrast of the silver colored shell concrete walls and the salmon colored brick and terracotta decoration is admirably suited to the semi-tropical setting. The plan is basically symmetrical, but its varied silhouette, towers, central cupola, balconies and rows of arches, produce a highly romantic effect. The building is entered through a great archway which leads into a large 150' square courtyard opposite which is the main entrance to the building. The principal rooms on the main floor are a great Rotunda 4 stories in height covered by the central cupola, and beyond on the main axis the great Dining Room, a vast room consisting of a great central space and semi-circular flanking elements. The lower levels of the Rotunda and Dining Room are treated in elaborate carved oak with fresco decoration above. The great parlor and ball room extends along a minor axis toward the West from the Rotunda.

One of the chief features of the building is its all concrete construction. This was composed of crushed coquina shell deposit and cement in a mixture of 6 to 1. The material was made on the spot and cast in place rammed down into wooden forms 3 inches at a time. (Florida the American Riviera, New York, 1887). The concrete surface is exposed and the shell content gives a pleasing texture. The Hotel was originally built with no private baths but these have been later installed. Apparently the original

building had electric lighting, but the Rotunda was illuminated by a gas
beacon in the Cupola lantern which shone through a glass panel.

Prepared by

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HABS St. Augustine Field Office

Date

August 1961

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carrere, John, and Thomas Hastings. Florida, the American Riviera: St. Augustine, the WinterNewport; the Ponce de Leon, the Alcazar, the Casa Monica. N.Y.: Gilliss Brothers & Turnure, The Art Age Press, 1887.
(Copy located in St. Augustine Historical Society)
- Castleden, Louise Decatur (ed.) The Early Years of the Ponce de Leon- Clippings from an Old Scrapbook of Those Days. Privately printed brochure: Louise Decature Castleden, 1957
- Florida East Coast Railway. A Brief History of the Florida East Coast Railway and Associated Enterprises. St. Augustine, FL: Florida East Coast Railway, 1936
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- Florida Works Progress Administration. Seeing St. Augustine. WPA Project, St. Augustine, FL: Record Co., 1937
- Miami Herald Sunday Magazine. "The Ponce: Still a Symbol of Florida and Flagler," Miami Herald, Feb. 4, 1902, pp 6-7.